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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KAMPALA 001409

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 2019/12/21
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [UG](#)
SUBJECT: UGANDA: INTERNAL OPPOSITION TO ANTI-HOMOSEXUALITY BILL
EMERGES, BUT IS STILL LIMITED

REF: KAMPALA 1396; KAMPALA 1381

CLASSIFIED BY: Aaron Sampson, Pol/Econ Chief, State, Pol/Econ;
REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: Three domestic opponents of Uganda's anti-homosexuality bill received significant local press coverage during the December 12-13 weekend. The government-owned newspaper published a column against the bill by senior presidential advisor John Nagenda. Nagenda had earlier told PolOff he felt morally obligated to speak out against the legislation, which he compared to McCarthyism. Uganda's opposition newspaper published, under an anonymous byline, a remarkably well-written in-depth interview with an openly gay Ugandan woman living in Kampala. Parliamentary opposition leader Morris Latigo also spoke out against the bill. Meanwhile, members of Uganda's gay and lesbian community are increasingly concerned for their security. End Summary.

One Advisor Against Many

¶2. (C) The New Vision published a column by senior presidential advisor John Nagenda against the draft anti-homosexuality legislation on December 12. Nagenda is known for challenging prevailing political winds, and has previously advised President Museveni against running for re-election in 2011. His column compared the bill to McCarthyism and the Inquisition, and urged Parliament to vote against it. In a separate discussion with PolOff, Nagenda said the New Vision - which is edited by a Dutch national - initially refused to run his column, and agreed only after Nagenda threatened to never again write for the newspaper. Nagenda said he felt morally obligated to speak out against the legislation, and accused those behind it of obfuscating differences between homosexuality, rape, incest, and pedophilia.

¶3. (C) Nagenda said President Museveni is "quite intemperate" when it comes to homosexuality, but that the President will likely recognize the dangers of passing the anti-homosexuality legislation. He said First Lady Janet Museveni, who he described as a "very extreme woman", is ultimately behind the bill. He added that the bill's most vociferous public supporter, Ethics and Integrity Minister Nsaba Buturo, is a "very bad guy" responsible for a campaign of mass arrests - known by the Swahili term 'panda gari' - during the early 1980s under the Obote II regime while serving as Kampala's District Commissioner. Nagenda said Buturo is using the anti-homosexuality legislation to redefine himself and "will do anything in his power to be a populist." He advised the U.S. and other donors to refrain from publicly condemning the bill as this fuels the anti-homosexual and anti-western rhetoric of the bill's proponents.

Human Rights Lawyer Prepares for Parliamentary Hearings

14. (C) On December 9, human rights lawyer Ladislaus Rwakafuzi told PolOff that the Parliamentary Committee responsible for reviewing the legislation will likely not initiate hearings on the bill until March 2010 at the earliest (ref. A), and expressed hope that the bill could linger in committee for a year or more. Rwakafuzi is the only human rights lawyer working to defend Ugandan homosexuals against charges under pre-existing anti-homosexuality laws. He said he has already submitted on behalf of Uganda's gay and lesbian community a list of health care providers, human rights experts, and others prepared to testify before Parliament once public hearings commence. He said he will also urging Parliament to consider actual statistics regarding homosexuality and child abuse, as he knows that those pushing the legislation cannot produce any credible data to support their arguments.

KAMPALA 00001409 002 OF 002

15. (C) Rwakafuzi questioned whether the legislation's proponents would accept substantive changes to the bill, as this would signify a major political defeat. He urged the international community to publicly oppose the bill, citing its negative impact on human rights and the prevention of HIV/AIDS. But he said threatening to cut assistance if the bill is passed - as Sweden did recently (ref. B) - is counter productive and emboldens those pushing the legislation. Like Nagenda, Rwakafuzi noted Buturo's reputation for human rights violations while serving as Kampala's District Commissioner under the Obote II regime in the early 1980s.

Opposition Opposes Anti-Homosexuality Bill

16. (C) In a December interview with the Independent magazine, the official leader of the Parliamentary opposition, Morris Latigo, ridiculed provisions allowing for the death penalty as "absolutely outrageous." In Parliament in April, Latigo publicly supported Bahati's motion to introduce the legislation and urged fellow parliamentarians "to ensure that this motion comes as a Bill and as law as quickly as possible ." Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) spokesman Wafula Oguttu told PolOff on December 17 that Latigo's prior comments were articulated before the FDC took a position on the bill, and that the FDC now opposes passing the current legislation. In the Independent interview, Latigo warned that the bill will render Ugandan politics vulnerable to "mischief", lacks clear objectives, and is not based on solid facts. Latigo said he looks forward to appearing before the Legal and Parliamentary Affairs Committee to testify against the legislation.

Gay and Lesbian Community Security Concerns

17. (C) Human Rights Watch's (HRW) resident researcher told PolOff on December 14 that members of Uganda's gay and lesbian community are increasingly concerned for their own safety. HRW is working with an underground coalition of local gay, lesbian, and transgender activists to coordinate a response to the anti-homosexuality legislation. Fearing police surveillance and electronic eavesdropping, the coalition is unnamed and uses shifting code words to organize underground meetings. HRW said the majority of each meeting is dedicated to questions of personal security for coalition members.

18. (C) Local gay and lesbian activists pleaded with one member, Val Kalende, to reconsider a feature interview with the opposition newspaper the Daily Monitor. The Monitor ran the interview as the front page story, along with several photographs of Kalende, on December 12. Published under an anonymous byline, the article provides a striking and remarkably well-written portrait of Kalende's struggle against rising discrimination and hatred. After describing her initial reaction to Bahati's anti-homosexuality bill, Kalende said: "for the first time, I am very scared." Bahati's bill, said Kalende, "is not about homosexuality. It affects everyone; my pastor, my friends. It is not about us gays. Homosexuality is not about sodomizing young boys. What about relationships among people who are not hurting anyone?" The Monitor interview included a sidebar that dispassionately provided the facts about human homosexuality - its history and universality - and thus implicitly debunked many of the most absurd claims made by the bill's proponents.

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